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ICANN Board Rejects the Proposed Sale of .ORG to Ethos Capital

ICANN Board has rejected the proposed change of control request for the transfer of PIR from the Internet Society (ISOC) to Ethos Capital. In a decision made, the ICANN Board said: "withholding consent of the transfer of PIR from the Internet Society (ISOC) to Ethos Capital is reasonable, and the right thing to do," based on various factors that the Board believes will create unacceptable uncertainty for the future of .ORG, the third-largest gTLD registry. Factors mentioned include:

Concern over ICANN "being asked to agree to contract with a wholly different form of entity; instead of maintaining its contract with the mission-based, not-for-profit that has responsibly operated the .ORG registry for nearly 20 years, with the protections for its own community embedded in its mission and status as a not-for-profit entity."

Enforcement of disputes: "The transaction, as proposed, relies on ICANN as a backstop for enforcement of disputes between the .ORG community and the registry operator in an untested manner."

In a letter, Andrew Sullivan, ISOC President, and CEO expressed his disappointment over ICANN's decision. He wrote: "ICANN took much longer than it should have to render its decision, and in my view, stretched beyond its

own agreements and the remit in its bylaws. I am also concerned that ICANN has shown itself to be much more susceptible to political pressure than its mandate would recommend. Nevertheless, I am grateful that ICANN has now rendered a clear decision. This decision means that the period of uncertainty is over."

PIR says the decision is a failure of ICANN to follow its bylaws, processes, and contracts. EFF, one of the leading critics of the proposed sale, claimed victory stating, "The sale threatened to bring censorship and increased operating costs to the nonprofit world." Moving forward, EFF suggests, "ICANN should hold an open consultation, as they did in 2002, to select a new operator of the .ORG domain that will give nonprofits a real voice in its governance, and a real guarantee against censorship and financial exploitation."

Ethos Capital expressed its disappointment immediately following the decision stating ICANN has "set a dangerous precedent with broad industry implications." Ethos says it is evaluating its options and accuses ICANN of suffocating innovation and deterring future investment in the domain industry. "ICANN has empowered itself to extend its authority into areas that fall well outside of its legal mandate in acting as a regulatory body. Today's decision also creates an uncertain and unpredictable business environment, where the enforceability and value of the ICANN contract itself may be called into question now that the rules of transferring ownership are open to influence by outside interests. Ethos is evaluating its options at this time."

Source: CircleID

WIPO's Conversation on IP and AI to Continue as a Virtual Meeting

GENEVA - The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) published a revised issues paper on intellectual property policy and artificial intelligence (AI) as part of its ongoing consultation with stakeholders on the intersection of AI and IP policy and announced the dates of the rescheduled WIPO Conversation on Intellectual Property (IP) and Artificial Intelligence, which will take place online.

The Second Session of the WIPO Conversation on IP and AI will be held over three days from July 7 to 9, 2020 as a virtual meeting, in three daily sessions from 13:00 to 15:00 CET, to allow the broadest possible global audience to attend.

The First WIPO Conversation on AI and IP was convened by WIPO Director General Francis Gurry in September 2019, and brought together member states and other stakeholders to discuss the impact of Al on IP policy, with a view to collectively formulating relevant questions.

Following that meeting, Mr. Gurry announced that WIPO would launch an open process to develop a list of issues concerning the impact of Al on IP policy and invited feedback on an issues paper designed to help define the most-pressing questions likely to face IP policy makers as AI increases in importance. The result of that public consultation is contained in the revised issues paper, which takes into account the more than 250 submissions received from a wide global audience on the call for comments.

"The many respondents to the draft Issues Paper, including member states, academic, scientific and private organizations as well as individuals, are proof of the relevance and timeliness of and the significant engagement in the discussion on IP and AI. We look forward to continuing the Conversation in a more structured discussion in July on the basis of the revised Issues Paper," WIPO Director General Francis Gurry said.

Background: AI and IP

AI is increasingly driving important developments in technology and business. It is being employed across a range of industries, from telecommunications to autonomous vehicles.

Increasing stores of big data and advances in affordable high computing power are fueling AI's growth. AI has a significant impact on the creation, production and distribution of economic and cultural goods and services. Since one of the main aims of the IP system is to stimulate innovation and creativity in the economic and cultural systems, AI intersects with IP in a number of ways.

In January 2019, WIPO issued a study that surveyed the landscape of AI innovation. The "WIPO Technology Trends" report provides a common information base on AI for policy and decision makers in government and business, as well as concerned citizens across the globe.

WIPO then spearheaded the series of consultations with member states and other stakeholders to better understand the intersection between IP policy and AI.

Source: WIPO

ICANN and FIRST Sign Memorandum of Understanding on DNS Threats Mitigation

LOS ANGELES – The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) announced the signature of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams, Inc. (FIRST). The MoU aims to strengthen the relationship between ICANN and FIRST and enhance its collaborative efforts to support a safer, more secure, and resilient Domain Name System (DNS). These efforts are of interest to both parties and target important issues such as domain names used for abuse and security threats to the DNS. The agreement was signed by FIRST President and CEO Serge Droz and ICANN President and CEO Göran Marby.

"The role of the ICANN community, Board, and organization in maintaining a secure, stable, and unified system of identifiers for the Internet has always been important, but at this time, when reliance on the Internet has skyrocketed, our work with FIRST is vital." — Göran Marby, ICANN President and CEO.

Over the last few years, the cybersecurity and ICANN communities have centered discussions around identification of and mitigation efforts for domain name abuse and security threats to the DNS that affect millions of Internet users around the world. Through the MoU the organizations will advance their shared objective of helping the incident response community increase its understanding of the Internet's system of unique identifiers, and improve its efficiency and effectiveness in preventing, detecting, containing, mitigating, and analyzing malicious activity related to it. The MoU emphasizes cooperation on research, policy, and capacity-building activities focused on increasing risk awareness and DNS abuse mitigation practices.

About FIRST

Founded in 1990, the Forum of Incident Response and Security Teams (FIRST) consists of internet emergency response teams from more than 529 corporations, government bodies, universities and other institutions across 96 countries in the Americas, Asia, Europe, Africa, and Oceania. It promotes cooperation among computer security incident response teams. For more information, visit: https://www.first.org.

About ICANN

ICANN's mission is to help ensure a stable, secure, and unified global Internet. To reach another person on the Internet, you need to type an address – a name or a number – into your computer or other device. That address must be unique so computers know where to find each other. ICANN helps coordinate and support these unique identifiers across the world. ICANN was formed in 1998 as a not-for-profit public-benefit corporation with a community of participants from all over the world.

Source: ICANN

Is the Lockdown Driving Domain Registrations?

Businesses across Europe face a new and challenging situation not seen in generations. A mass lockdown of society due to the coronavirus pandemic with thousands of businesses having been forced to send employees home. The societal impact is broad and deep; however, for ccTLD registries, beyond changes to how staff work, other business effects so far seem minimal. One aspect of registry business may, however, be changing — the volume of registrations themselves. Figures from CENTR show a spike in new registrations in the month of April 2020.

Based on a sample of 25 ccTLDs, new domains registered in April 2020 is up 20% from the same time a year earlier. The increase has even pushed up median domain growth rates of the CENTR30 (30 largest CENTR member ccTLDs) — something seldom seen over the past decade.

Often domain registrations are linked to events by investors hoping to make a profit selling those domains on the secondary market or sometimes by those with criminal motivation such as to create fake webshops selling products that will not be delivered. It is important to consider this before explaining other theories to the boost in new registrations.

A study conducted by CENTR in April 2020 studied newly registered domains of 12 ccTLDs between January and March 2020. The ccTLDs reported a total of combined 6154 domains which contained the term covid, corona and/or virus. To put this into perspective, the same set of ccTLDs recorded a total over 751K newly registered domains in the same 3-month period. The covid related domains, therefore, represent just 0.8%. A web crawler scanned the impacted domains finding roughly 26% had some sort of active website. The study shows a couple of things — firstly, that the appetite for covid themed domains appears small in ccTLDs and secondly that it does not likely explain the overall boost in new domains.

A more plausible theory to the boost in new domains links to the changing business and employment landscape. As lockdown has considerably reduced in-person customers to high street shops and cast millions of workers into precarious employment status, businesses and individuals have had to adapt. In order to cushion the impacts from falling revenues, traditional high street “bricks and mortar,” businesses have had to explore new and alternative ways of doing business. If a business did not have an online presence before, the pandemic has given a compelling reason to do so now. From fitness studios conducting classes online, theatres live-streaming shows, and countless others rapidly upgrading their sites to include payment gateways for orders, an online presence is more important than ever.

Take, for example, ‘The filling station Eco store’ — a small locally operated business in Galway, Ireland. The business offers “minimal waste dried groceries and eco-

friendly household alternatives" and has been in operation since mid-2019. Although the owner did not previously consider a website to be a priority, it has now become a necessity for survival. A domain has since been registered in March, a website built, and the business is now taking online orders.

It is not just existing businesses upgrading their web presence. New business ventures are popping up that are capitalizing on the new market demands created by the pandemic. For example, this London business selling face masks.

Will the spike in new registrations continue?

One of the key drivers of the continued selloff among stock markets around the world was based on a warning from a World Health Organization official who said the coronavirus might be a permanent fixture. It is becoming clear that the new business environment may become the new normal, which includes a deglobalization of society.

Deglobalization will move society and business to become more oriented to the local community, and limitations on physical distance will push them online more than ever. While domain names are just a small part of the online ecosystem, their role may become increasingly important. To illustrate the potential, consider that in many countries, SMEs account for well over 95% of the overall business population. Furthermore, the increase in local flavour may be an opportunity for ccTLD registries to reinforce their role as a locally focused and operated domain.

Whatever happens, the shift in the way business works is already happening. The opportunities to businesses may be substantial, and domain names represent tried and tested avenue to the online world.

Source: CircleID

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